Words of Wise

Stephen S. Wise
Founder of the Stephen Wise
Free Synagogue
1907

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SEYMOUR DURST

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Words of Wise

These "Words of Wise" speak for themselves. Culled from the sermons Stephen S. Wise preached at the Free Synagogue and his writings (most of them from "Opinion", the magazine he edited), they are as relevant to the problems and needs of today as they were when first uttered. They are offered as a loving tribute by the members and friends of the Synagogue he founded and dedicated to the ideal of freedom in pulpit and pew, school and society.

Stephen S. Wise's preaching and writing were both profound and moving, the rarest combination of mind and heart. His eloquence made him the greatest preacher of modern times. The wide range of topics included here reveal the breadth of his interest, the far reaches of his vision, and the depths of his moral fervor.

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Pulpit Freedom
1906

The chief office of the minister is not to represent the views of the congregation, but to proclaim the truth as he sees it. How can he serve a congregation as a teacher save as he quickens the minds of his hearers by the vitality and independence of his utterances? But how can a man be vital and independent and helpful, if he be tethered and muzzled? A free pulpit, worthily filled, must command respect and influence; a pulpit that is not free, howsoever filled, is sure to be without potency and honor.

A free pulpit will sometimes stumble into error; a pulpit that is not free can never powerfully plead for truth and righteousness. In the pursuit of the duties of his office, the minister may from time to time be under the necessity of giving expression to views at variance with the views of some, or even many, members of the congregation. Far from such difference proving the pulpit to be in the wrong, it may and ofttimes is, found to signify that the pulpit had done its duty in calling evil evil and good good, in abhorring the moral wrong of putting light for darkness and darkness for light, and in scorning to limit itself to the utterance of what the prophet has styled "smooth things," lest variance of views arise.

Too great a dread there may be of secession on the part of some members of a congregation, for, after all, difference and disquiet, even schism at the worst, are not so much to be feared as that attitude of the pulpit which never provokes dissent because it is cautious rather than courageous, peace-loving rather than prophetic, time-serving rather than right-serving. The minister is not to be the spokesman of

the congregation, not the message-bearer of the congregation, but the bearer of a message to the congregation. What the contents of the message shall be, must be left to conscience and understanding and loyalty of him in whom a congregation places sufficient confidence to elect him to minister to it.

THE FREE SYNAGOGUE 1907

Editor's Note: From an address in 1907, and later anniversary sermons.

What is a Free Synagogue? I answer: A Synagogue! A Synagogue, a Jewish society, for I am a Jew, a Jewish teacher. The Free Synagogue is not to be an indirect or circuitous avenue of approach to Unitarianism; it is not to be a society for the gradual conversion of Jewish men or women to any form of Christianity. We mean to be vitally, intensely, unequivocally Jewish. Jews who would not be Jews, will find no place in the Free Synagogue, for we, its founders, wish to be not less Jewish but more Jewish in the highest and noblest sense of the term.

The Free Synagogue will be Jewish loyally, unswervingly, uncompromisingly Jewish in its ideals, in its free and democratic organization, in its free and unmuzzled pulpit, in its free and unhampered presentation of Jewish teachings.

Not to innovate but to renovate, not to destroy but to reconstruct, will be the dominant purpose of the Free Synagogue.

The aim of the Free Synagogue is to reassert the democratic ideal of Israel, to democratize anew the spirit and form alike of the present-day synagogue.

The Free Synagogue will present the teachings of Judaism in the light of today added to the light of yesterday; its watch-word will be "Reverence for, but not bondage to, the past." Judaism is Wahrheit in Fortschritt, "Truth on the March."

The three features of the Free Synagogue are, first, it is a free and independent organization. There are "no pews, no dues," meaning that nobody pays rent for a pew and owns it, and that while the contributions for the Synagogue's support vary, all the members are on an equality.

In the second place, the pulpit is entirely free. A free pulpit may be defined as one from which the preacher is free to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, at all times and upon all subjects.

Thirdly, the Synagogue is free in the sense that it embodies the idea of the free development of the ethics of Judaism.

We have created a Synagogue of light and life, unlike so many churches and temples and synagogues in this city,

which are only the solemn gateways to suburban cemeteries.

I sought freedom from narrowing and petrifying sectarian and partisan processes within the Synagogue. This it was that inspired me to have part in the Zionist movement, aiming at the freedom of Jews as a people in their own land; again, through the instrumentality of the American and World Jewish Congress, to seek freedom from fascist attack upon democracy; freedom from assault upon the right of Jews to live as man with men.

I would that the Free Synagogue be prophetic of the contribution which Israel is to make to the commonwealth of the western world — the ethicization, the socialization, the religionization of the American Democracy.

The Free Synagogue embodies the ideal of liberalism in Jewish life. It serves the Jewish community, American and world; but it is passionately loyal to the American ideal. It has been a center of genuine, not superficial, abiding, not momentary, Jewish-Christian interfaith and fellowship. It embodies the ideals of Jewish brotherhood, and fellowship with men of all faiths and races.

THE PRESS
1910

The press ought to inform, and thus form, the public mind and the public conscience. The press is the daily teacher of the whole nation, men and women, young and old. The press is a people's university that never shuts its doors and never grants itself or its students a vacation. The gathering and distributing of news is an important function in our civilization, but a press that limits its activities to such functioning is defunct. Nor is it the spirit of judicial impartiality, but of ill-judged timidity, that moves the journalist to accept as valid the counsel: The press can afford only to mount the cresting wave, not go beyond it. The editor might as well shoot his reader with a bullet as with a new idea. He must hit the exact line of the opinion of the day.

Stoutly must the press resist the spreading notion that the newspaper is to be a mere purveyor of news rather than a bringer of intelligence, that its sole business is to be collector and disseminator of news. Such as would limit the press to news gathering, and restrict the pulpit to the preaching of the law or the simple gospel, by inhibiting it from dealing with any personage more recent than Hezekiah, or any event less remote than the fall of Jerusalem, would reduce the press and the pulpit alike to futility and impotence.

Nor is it possible daily to present the facts of the world's happenings without some intimation of editorial thought or

feeling. A vital personage in command of a newspaper office cannot be opinionless and neutral unless the silence of neutrality be the outcome of barter, open or covert. The newspaper cannot, in the nature of things, avoid being the interpreter as well as reporter of the events of the day which in the main it merely chronicles. And interpretation is that projection of personality which in turn clothes the skeleton of facts with opinion and comment. The newspaper that purports to be nothing more than a purveyor of news simply surrenders its views, and usually magnifies its crime by basely mirroring the thought of its readers, whether reasoned or unreasoned, wise or foolish, honest or false. There are churches, too, which demand that the pulpit preach from the pew-point rather than from its own viewpoint. But in the pulpit of such churches the man will upon investigation be found to be a phonographic mannikin, reproducing with unimpeachable fidelity every opinion and judgment of the pew.

THE PROPHETIC IMPERATIVE 1910

We face the peril of forgetting one and not the lesser phase of the Judaism task, the establishment of a "social system which is to be a model to the nations and to contain the maximum of social justice." A non-Jewish writer on the purpose of the Jew in history forecasts Israel's task in the words: "The Jew has had burnt into his very soul a regard for the rights of others, and a sympathy with the oppressed which makes him especially fit for the practical part of his divine work. Judaism may have no concrete solution to offer of the mighty problems which face our age, but this we know – if the social ideal of the Hebrew prophets were regnant in our present-day civilization, injustice and inequity would cease to be and the requirement of the Lord, which is justice, would become the voluntary bond between man and man.

Such was the social message of Israel, which found clearest expression in the teaching of her prophets. The message of the prophets in every age must be social. If the message of social living be needed in every age, our own is in direct need of a word that shall restore peace to the discordant and warring elements of our so-called civilization.

"Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit."

I sometimes fear that we ought in truth read the line of the poet differently; at the prophets' feet the nations sit still. Let not the nations still sit nor yet sit still at the prophets' feet, but arise and follow in their footsteps, not standing where they stood but journeying on toward the

goal whither they directed their steps. The privileged burden of Israel is to fulfill the injunction which the prophet laid not upon one son of Israel but upon the heart of Israel, the suffering priest-servant of humanity: he shall bring forth justice according to truth; he shall not fail nor be abashed till he have set justice upon the earth. Then shall justice flow like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS 1915

The woman's movement rests upon the cardinal truth that, inasmuch as life is a sacred thing and personality inviolable, woman ought to be as free as is man to determine the content of life for herself. Woman must not have life marked out for her by a custom or convention or expediency. She must be a truly free and self-determining being. Her life must cease to be relative to man.

Woman must make and shape her own life, and she must no longer be expected to live in terms of relativity, in terms of dependence, in terms of complement. In the words of an English writer, ceasing to be a secondary being of derivative value, she must become a personality instead of being the reproductive faculty personified. Woman's freedom from marriage, on the one hand, and within marriage, on the other hand, is a proof of the moralizing influence of the woman's movement. A movement, which has done much to bring about justice and equality between the two sexes in the marriage relation, is almost religious in its essence.

The moral and religious emphasis of the woman's movement upon the sacredness of life is resulting in a lesser toleration of needless war on the part of women. Too long has woman been satisfied bravely to endure, grimly and silently to send her loved ones to be slain and to slay. She has paid the toll with the sons for whom she has agonized; she has already shared none of war's so-called glories and paid all of its real and terrible penalties. For one thing, after man had failed, woman had learned how to heal war's bruised and broken victims. In war and in peace for sixty years and more, the hand of woman had healed the hurts and the wounds of men.

Today the time has come when women are beginning to realize that they need not suffer war to be waged, that they should not bear men that these may be slaughtered by savage hell-like war. We note the increasing determination of woman to avert war, to refuse to pay the cost of war in human life. Men have made war too long; at last women are to unmake war. Too long have we blessed the men, who

have been the peace-breakers and the war-makers; today we bless the women who are to become the war-breakers and the peace-makers.

The vote of women will mean the beginning of the end of war. Nations will not lightly plunge into war when the question of war or peace will in part be left to the decision of women to whom war comes home with all its grim and terrible reality. And yet it need not be said that if war ought to be, women will ever be the first to hazard all in behalf of country and honor.

WOMEN & CAREERS 1921

If I had to choose, I would rather say that there should be no motherhood for women without a calling than that there should be no motherhood for women with a calling. I, for my part, believe that to raise the question whether a mother has the right earnestly to follow a calling outside of her home diverts attention from a much more serious problem. Namely, the problem of giving content and calling to the life of motherhood in our time. Much graver than the evil of the over-employed or engrossed mother is the hurt to the home of a mother without a job or calling.

The thing that I fear in the new life of womanhood is not the woman who makes too much of a career and too little of her home, but the woman who makes nothing of herself within or without her home, the woman who achieves no dignity of life within her family circle and does nothing worthy of the name beyond the walls of her home. This is the kind of mother who in our day deserves to be rebuked, not that rarer woman who for the sake of a profession or a calling refuses to limit herself to a home the duties of which are not and cannot, after the early childhood of a little one, be completely engrossing.

CIVIL RIGHTS 1915

Lincoln was prophetic in yet another sense, for he was the foreseer of the newer and truer democracy. He struck a deadly blow at that most terrible of all castes, the caste of race. If we are to be true to his memory, we must strike other and telling blows at every vestige of the false idolatry of caste and rank. Democracy is not an institution to be created, nor a structure to be established, nor even an ideal to be realized. More unsubstantial, withal more vital and preduring than all of these, be it not forgotten that democracy is the attitude of the common mind, that it is the aspiration of the commonalty.

Lincoln fulfilled the idea laid down in the holy writ for the government of those who are to choose judges and

rulers of the people: "Moreover, thou shalt choose out of all the people men of strength, such as fear God, men of truth, hating their own gain."

Men of strength were the judges and rulers to be! He was a man of that moral strength which is the noblest courage—strong enough to dare to be in the right and to do the right though he must needs stand alone. Let us not forget his strength, who was as strong as he was simple, not only strong enough to carry on a mighty war to a triumphant close, but strong enough to oppose an unjust war, even though waged by his country. So strong was he that, refusing to be goaded on by his friends and unafraid of his foes, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation at the right hour, when it was destined to achieve the greatest good. Man of strength was he who, three days before his assassination, gave voice to the guiding rule of his life: "Important principles may and must be inflexible"; who, in his Cooper Union address, delivered himself of the almost prophetic burden: "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare do our duty as we understand it."

YOUTH
1917

The freedom of youth means freedom to be one's self, to be a law unto one's self, not be one's self in lawlessness. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, remembering that the responsibility of decision rests with you and that, despite of all the lives that have been lived, and all the maps that have been drawn, and all the plans that have been sketched, and all the precedents that have been set, you must live your own life, and, if it be not your own life, it is not life at all.

Cherish the counsels of loved ones but remember that neither mother nor father, uncle nor cousin nor any kinsman or kinswoman whatsoever can choose whom you are to serve. You cannot serve God unless yours be the choice. Young men and women require to be warned against a thousand and one influences ever lurking near at hand to deter youth from the hazard of the spirit's pioneering. Despise the counsels of the over-wise and over-mature, the sum of whose low wisdom is that a man can make no graver mistake in life than to wander from the paths which all men else have pursued.

The fear of seeming unusual obsesses the soul of too many of us. Not a few men and women would rather be wrong than seem different. Difference, variance, distinctiveness are not ends in themselves, but may become, and ofttimes are, the means that must be used by him who is

not fearful of moral distinction.

Outward differentiation is nothing, but inward distinction is everything—is the counsel I ever urge upon my fellow Jews. We are not to seem different for the sake of seeming, but we are to dare to seem to be different in order to be distinguished, in order to achieve spiritual outstandingness. When nice and refined and timid people say to you: "Remember to be like everybody else, don't attempt anything new, don't run the risk of seeming peculiar, don't dream of venturing upon novel courses whether in things great or small," remember that there is a possible invasion of the soul's integrity that no man need endure. To the counsels of the timorous fling back the command to the brave—"Always do what you are afraid to do."

MIDDLE AGE
1917

Middle age depends upon youth and its disillusionments are due chiefly to the absence of illusions in the time of youth. In middle and in old age men suddenly discover that they cannot reap what in youth they have failed to sow. That middle age finds the ideals of youth unsatisfying and even unengrossing, indicts only youth and not itself, shows that the map of life, if drawn at all and as drawn in youth, was not ample and generous enough to have proved sufficing for a lifetime.

Assuming that middle age is less joyous than youth, it enjoys one supreme satisfaction, or rather reaps one supreme compensation, that of the consciousness of two powers, two of life's sovereign powers, the power to achieve and the power to serve. If youth initiates, middle age most achieves and best serves—most achieves because it is a time of fullness of intellectual strength and firmness of moral will; best serves because the stains of self have been or ought to have been burnt out and there is left the capacity of selfless enlistment under banners unrelated to personal gain or private advantage. The middle age that men find bare and unsatisfying is in truth that to them who have not mastered the two arts of life, achieving and serving.

Perhaps the supreme rule for middle age may be phrased in the fewest of words – *don't stop growing!* Physical and intellectual maturity are not interchangeable terms. The truth is that men almost consciously cease to grow, and even will not to grow at thirty-five and forty and forty-five and then proceed to wonder why life is so unsatisfying. Let men but remember that there is no such thing as maturity in life – if maturity mean the cessation of growth – for maturity were followed by post-maturity, which is over-

ripeness. Men need never cease to grow and mature. Men will either grow up or go down. The great and satisfying lives are those of men and women who grow on, and go on, until they are cut down. When Freeman died, he asked that on his gravestone be carved the words – "He died learning." He who grows and learns dies not. Continue, as long as thou wouldst grow to learn and reason and purpose, nor yet imagine that life is done when youth is ended. Nor let the middle aged forget that going on is not the only possibility. Even in middle age a man may reserve for himself freedom, freedom of choice, freedom to revise life's foundations, freedom to begin anew if so be error have been made.

Above all, middle age must not lose its admirations, its reverences, its enthusiasms. The edge of enthusiasm may be dulled with the passing of the years – but the body and substance of one's admirations need not be diminished, and we live by our admirations. Anatole France, speaking of the old campaigners of the Reserve, uses this finely stimulating word with regard to them: "They unite the elasticity of youth with the staunchness of maturity." There is another and an older way of describing the characteristic quality of middle age, which must combine "the wisdom of age and the heart of youth."

OLD AGE
1917

Much, if not everything, of the content of old age depends on the things for which one cares. If one cares for the things that cannot survive youth or middle age, whose value is inexorably lessened with the flight of years, then old age must become barren and empty. Whether your old age is to be void and meaningless depends almost wholly not upon what you have and care for at seventy or eighty, but what it was you sought to have at twenty, what you cared for at thirty, what you cherished at forty. Certain things may be harmless, even admirable in themselves, and yet are destined to be woefully disappointing if they are suffered to become the pursuits of a lifetime and men give themselves to things for which they cannot care when the years have multiplied.

Myopia may interfere with one's zest for looking upon motion pictures, limbs may become too rheumatic for dancing, tragic though this may sound the hazard of games of chance may lose its fascination, even money-making, the accumulation of things, may pall or become impossible. But certain things there are that can never grow stale nor wearying nor seem unprofitable. Upon these, let men fix their vision and their aim, the pleasures of the mind, the

tasks of the spirit, the possibilities of serving. It is almost life's greatest danger that life will be lived with care for things, interest in which cannot survive youth and middle age. What if a man were so to train himself physically that he could run and do nothing else, so that after the period of running had passed, he could not walk! Would not such modus vivendi seem unwise and sadly blundering?

Would you avoid growing old? Do you will even to seem not to grow old? Then have a vision of life and amid a multiplicity of things have and hold, cherish and pursue an ideal. To the man of ideals, to the man who in other words lives, age comes not. Age cannot touch nor wither nor blast the life pervaded and smitten through by ideals. Would you grow old, or rather would you not grow old, then live, and live by the stars. Such are the lives of the unaging. In order not to grow old, I say again, grow on in faith and hopefulness, in vision and serviceableness. Being without these things, some men cannot grow old, they are old. Unhappily for them, they were born old, as other men, whatever be the number of their years, die young. Having these things, age cannot ravage the spirit.

SELF-INTEREST AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST 1910

The hour has come for industrial peace. It must be peace with honor, say some. But it must be more than peace with honor. It must be peace with security as well. We would have no peace with honor for some, and at the same time deny security to all. The issue at stake is not the open shop but the closed door, which shuts out the toilers from safety and justice.

The disaster proves anew that we have no right to leave everything to be done by officials, that the official point of view and the official service must, at every moment, be supplemented by voluntary service, the service of skilled, disinterested, consecrated volunteers, who will not shirk and shift responsibility for the non-enforcement of worthless law but effectively enforce preventive laws. In addition to the most effective laws, in addition to the most honest inspection, the most rigorous enforcement, and every preventive and arrestive measure as well as the most vigilant volunteer inspection, we need the inflexible and vitalizing resolve to deal so justly by the workers, the burdenbearers of the nation, as shall compel sufficing safeguarding measures today, and compel more and more on the morrow. Above all things, let not men shield themselves behind conditions, and say that we are the victims and not the makers of circumstances. In mapping out a program for

the safeguarding of the life of the workers, we demand the cooperation of factory builders and factory owners and factory managers, and unless such willing constant cooperation be accorded us, we shall not wait for another calamity before pointing the finger of guilt and shame and crying out: Thou art the man.

The lesson of the hour is that while property is good, life is better, that while possessions are valuable, life is priceless. The meaning of the hour is that the life of the lowliest worker in the nation is sacred and inviolable, and if that sacred human right be violated we shall stand adjudged and condemned before the tribunal of God and of history.

Because life is sacred we realize today the indivisible oneness of human welfare. The women and men will have died in vain unless we today highly resolve – My brother's wrong is my own. I am not merely the keeper of my brother and sister. I must be the safeguarding, justice-dealing brother to all men and women in God's world.

TRIANGLE FIRE 1911

Editor's Note: At meeting in protest against the negligence which resulted in the loss of 140 lives, most of them young women, in the fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company off Washington Square. Such protests led eventually to major reforms in the sweatshops.

It is not the action of God, but the inaction of man that is responsible. I see in this disaster not the deed of God, but the greed of man. For law is divine, and this disaster was brought about by lawlessness and inhumanity. Certain calamities man can do no more than vainly deplore – such calamities as the San Francisco earthquake and the destruction by volcano of Martinique. But this was not an inevitable disaster which men could neither force nor control.

It is not a question of enforcement of law nor of inadequacy of law. We have the wrong kind of laws and the wrong kind of enforcement. Before insisting upon inspection and enforcement, let us lift up the industrial standards so as to make conditions worth inspecting, and, if inspected, certain to afford security to the workers. Instead of unanimity in the shirking of responsibility, we demand that departments shall cooperate in planning ahead and working for the future, with some measure of prevision and wisdom. And when we go before the legislature of the State, and demand increased appropriations in order to ensure the possibility of a sufficient number of inspectors, we will not forever be put off with the answer: We have no money.

This meeting is not summoned in order to appeal for charity on behalf of the families of the slain. What is needed is the redress of justice and the remedy of prevention. The families of the victims ought to be beyond the

reach of the need of charity. Having denied them the justice of physical security, we ought at least be willing to give their survivors the justice of economic redress. They need justice, not charity. It is we who need charity, for dare we face inexorable justice?

We know that we cannot and should not take away property without due process of law. Neither may we take away life with or without due process of law. Alas, for another one of a multitude of proofs that we regard property as sacred, and are ready to suffer a violation of the rights of life as if they were not sacred but violable, and violable with impunity.

This consuming fire will have been nothing more than a flash in the pan if other evils are suffered to go unchecked and uncorrected – evils not less terrible because less swift and less sudden. It is just as necessary to protect women workers from the industrial and occupational diseases as it is to protect them from the industrial accidents. We need to provide not only for security from accidents but security from the incidents of the industrial regime. I would have women workers safeguarded in every way, spiritually disastrous consequences of overwork and underpay and undernourishment and insanitary housing, which seem to be the inevitable accompaniments of things as they are today.

THE PULPIT AND LABOR 1919

Editor's Note: An expression of moral indignation on the use of blacklists and labor spies to break the strike and unionizing of workers at the plant of the United States Steel Company, headed by Judge Gary.

I have not willed to rest my case upon the spectre of fear but rather upon the hope of justice. I am not fearful of what the workers may in their strength and wrath some day rise to do, but I am ashamed of the injustice which we today are inflicting or suffering to be inflicted upon the workers. The workers who in a democracy are denied the right to organize and to deal collectively with their employers are not free men and the want of freedom cannot be palliated by benefits however generous or bonuses however warily devised.

I can think of no meaner thing than to label everything Bolshevism today which one is bent upon destroying. The strikers are not Bolshevists; they are found within the ranks of employer and employee alike. But to crush freedom is to evoke the spirit of Bolshevism. For Bolshevism with all its evils and curses holds the Czarism of yesterday responsible, Bolshevism is the outcome of long-smothered revolt against Czarism. I believe that Czarism may prove to be the most prolific breeder of Bolshevism in America.

If there is a larger and a higher duty, it is the duty of the Synagogue pulpit. It does not pretend to maintain the

great and prophetic tradition, but the pulpit of the Synagogue is charged with the responsibility of prophetic memories and prophetic aspirations. If the Jewish pulpit ought to speak out at this time concerning the industrial situation, then upon the pulpit in which I stand, pledged to truth-speaking under freedom, there lies a most solemn and inescapable duty. I could not with self-respect remain silent, and if I did, and were indifferent to the retention of that self-respect, you would speedily and justly feel that I had been silent for a cause, that I had chosen the part of personal ease and congregational advantages and you would be the first to withhold your respect even though half-heartedly you continued your material support.

ETHICS OF BUSINESS 1921

The most powerful of all human motives is man's will to see to it that justice is done to his fellowman. A motive only slightly less potential than enlightened unselfishness is enlightened selfishness. Is it not of immeasurable value to the cause of righteousness to have it brought home to men and women with unanswerable emphasis that enlightened selfishness and enlightened unselfishness must need pursue a common end, and that, far from the interest of producer and consumer clashing, they are, and of right ought to be, one and inseparable?

If self-regard urge us to scrutinize the sources of our supplies in food and clothing, because of the peril to the consumer incident to unclean and unhealthful methods of production, it is but a single step to concern for the toilers, housed amid unsanitary and unhealthful conditions. The high art of other-regardfulness will be developed to the extent to which the science of self-regard gains recognition. To the question of the ages, "Am I my brother's keeper?" men and women answer with the resistless strength of conviction: "Yes, we are the keepers of all, and above all, we are the keepers of our little brother and sister, the child toiler, suffered by man's inhumanity to toil for and in the place of man."

Carlyle tells the tale of a woman, sick to death in a Glasgow alley, begging for the help which men withheld from her. No one thought of her as a sister. But she died, and the dread typhus which killed her spread through the neighborhood and counted its victims by the score. Thus, does Carlyle grimly argue, did she prove her sisterhood to those who denied her. Shall men and women wait for such ghastly reminders of the oneness of the race? Our age would not render itself immune from contagion from the

stricken and sisterless woman, but would sister and succor the woman worker and the man-worker and the child-worker, by such means as can alone avail through justice and the love which upon justice waits.

OVERWORKED CHARITY AND UNDERWORKED JUSTICE 1911

Editor's Note: From an address at the annual banquet of the New York Chamber of Commerce. Among those present were Andrew Carnegie, James H. Hill, J.P. Morgan, Charles Schwab.

I must say to you tonight that which I have said about you upon many other occasions – flattering you with that frank truth-speaking than which I could offer you no sincerer tribute.

When I have read from time to time of religious noon-day meetings held in shops and factories for the wage earners, I have ventured to observe that the important thing is not so much to bring religious ministration to the daily toilers—the soldiers of the common good—as to bring it to the captains of industry and commerce, which you are. For the conscience of the nation, after all, will be that which you make it. Yours is the high and solemn duty not only of registering, but in large part of determining the character of the conscience of the nation.

Not only ought the barter or trade side of business be completely moralized, but we need to ethicize what might be called the process of creating and production, of distribution and consumption. No business order is just, nor can it long endure, if it be bound up with the evil of unemployment on the one hand and over-employment on the other, the evil of a man's under-wage and a child's toil, and all those social maladjustments incidental to our order which we lump together under the name of poverty. Let us not imagine that we can shift to the shoulders of overworked charity the burdens that can be borne only by the strength of underworked justice. Yes, the stricken ask not the occasional tonic of charity, but the daily meat and substance of justice. We are never to forget that ours is a democracy, that a democracy, in the words of a high servant of the commonwealth, means "the use of all the resources of nature by all the faculties of man for the good of all the people . . . "

The conscience of the nation is not real unless the nation safeguard the workingman, safeguard him from the peril of overwork, as well as from the occasional accidents of industry. The conscience of the nation is not vital unless we protect women and children in industry, and protect them with half the thoroughness and generosity with which, for many decades, we have protected infant industries. We have not the right to speak of the importance of conserving the opportunity for initiative on the part of the individual

as long as masses of individuals are suffered to perish without the opportunity of real life. The aim of democracy is not to be the production of efficient, machine-like men in industry. The first business of democracy is to be the industry of turning out completely effective, because completely free and self-determining, citizens.

CHILD vs. PARENT 1922

Nothing is more important than to teach children, especially the children of the privileged, the art of unselfishness unless it be for the parents of privileged children to practice it. The fact that many, many families in our days are of the one or two-children variety gives to the child a tremendous impact in the direction of self-centredness—toward what I have elsewhere called an egocentric or "meocentric" world. If, however, as happens too commonly, children are treated by selfishly and idiotically indulgent parents during the years of childhood and adolescence as if every one of them were the center of the universe, it will little avail to cry out against the child's selfishness just because he or she has reached twenty. Other-centredness will not be substituted for self-centredness at twenty, however much parents may be dismayed, if during the first twenty years the perhaps native selfishness of the child has been ministered to in every imaginable way.

In order to deepen the spirit of filial unselfishness it is needful to give, or rather to help children to have and to hold, an aim bigger than themselves. Given unselfishness, the freedom from self-seeking and self-ministration and the presence of the will to minister and to forbear, that unselfishness which is the exclusive grace neither of parent nor of child, then comradeship, the hand-in-hand quest of life, becomes possible. Then and only then may parent and child become comrades, not fellow-boarders and roomers and hoarders, but fellow-travelers and sojourners alike along life's way. Without comradeship, whatever else there be, there can be no such thing as home. Comradeship shuts out the sense of possession, prevents the invasion of personality, averts alike parental tyranny and filial autocracy.

But comradeship is not to be achieved through the word of parents and children—Go to, let us be comrades. For comradeship is that which grows out of the cumulative and united experience of parent and child, if these have so lived and so labored together that unconsciously and inevitably there come to pass the fellowship of life's pilgrimage in real togetherness, comrades with souls "utterly true forever and aye." No compulsion to sympathy and understanding and

forbearance where the spirit of comradeship dwells! And such comradeship is unaffected by outward circumstance or by diversities of viewpoint or of educational opportunity or of worldly possession.

THE HOME
1922

The home must become a school wherein parents and children alike sit as eager learners and humble teachers, a school for parents in the latter days in the arts of renunciation and for children in the fine arts of outward courtesy and inward chivalry. In such a classroom the child will learn to think non-filially for itself, though it will not cease to feel filially. Under such auspices, the child will be neither a manageable nor an unmanageable thing, but a person bent upon self-direction and self-determination through the arts of self-discipline. In the interest of that self-discipline which parental example can do most to foster, let it be remembered by parents that no rule is as effective with children as self-mastery, that the only convincing and irrefutable authority is inner authoritativeness.

Spencer has laid down the ideal for the home: "to produce a self-governing being; not to produce a being to be governed by others." If parents are so unwise as to postpone and deny the right of children to live their lives until after their parents are dead, it may be that these will die too late for their own comfort. Parents who rely upon parental authority, whatever that may mean, in dealing with children ought to be quietly chloroformed or peacefully deposited in the Museum of Natural History by the side of the almost equally antique Diplodoccus.

UNEMPLOYMENT
1931

The unemployment disaster is the test of the present social order, of its basic justness, of its capacity to live. Men threaten that the unemployment tragedy, such as is now being enacted, is bound to be followed by Bolshevism. True it is that regularly recurrent unemployment, with all of the hardships and suffering and ultimate moral degradation as well as physical damage which it entails, is only another name for chaos. After chaos anything may happen, as everything happened after the chaos of Czarist dominion. Bolshevism will never be a substitute for orderly, reasonable, worthwhile government. It will always be a danger to government that is no government, but rather a planless and chaotic industrial life which guarantees nothing more than rewards to a few, and the denial of even the decencies of life to the many.

Unemployment is a social or industrial disease, the

gravest disease of our industrial organism. It is not unpreventable. Insofar as it is not unpreventable, it is an economic crime. Above all, unemployment, from the viewpoint of human values, is a tragedy of gigantic dimensions, comparable to the tragedy of war.

The disease, the tragedy have come to pass because of planlessness. Men are planless because they are purposeless, save for the purposeful, who think unemployment not too great a price to pay for the social order as it is.

NAZISM
THE FIRST
WARNING
1933

Men and women, remember my prophecy. Let the young people remember my words: you will see what will happen ten and twenty years hence, if this "Aryanism," this Gleichschaltung, remains within the Hitler Reich. You cannot have a people uniform, without difference, no variety, no dissent, no heresy, no racial heresy. You cannot have that inside of a nation, without the nation finally wrecking itself in the effort to make that race or nation dominant, not only inside but outside of the boundaries of that land. When will American civilization challenge Hitlerism?

My answer, the answer not of a Jew but of an American, is: America will and ought to challenge Hitlerism, not with guns, not with arms, not by enmity, but by the voice, a mighty voice, a magic voice. It is the one most potent voice in the whole world. God give it, that for the sake of America's soul, that for the sake of civilization, for his own sake, the President's mighty voice may yet be raised in one of the critically decisive hours of human need in human history. Up to this time America has not yet ranged itself alongside of the forces of civilization. It cannot, it does not, and it will not sympathize with Hitlerism, and all that Hitlerism means. Some day, it may be soon, that voice must be lifted in no uncertain terms. And after it shall have been, with a new faith, and a new loyalty, we shall thank God for America, our country, and for its leader, our President.

NAZISM
1933

We understand the plea and the plaint of our brother Jews in Germany. There are German patriots who love their Fatherland and have had reason to love it. Some of their leaders are under the impact of panic and terror, others under some form of compulsion, in any event the compulsion of a great fear if not actual coercion. Do they appeal to the Nazi Government to bring about a cessation of its anti-Jewish campaign as they have appealed to us to end

our protest? We have no quarrel with our Jewish brothers in Germany and their leaders, but their policy of uncomplaining assent and of super-cautious silence has borne evil fruit. They who have virtually been silent through the years of anti-Jewish propaganda cannot be followed by us as the wisest of counsellors. And if things are to be worse because of our protest, if there are to be new penalties and new reprisals in Germany, which I cannot bring myself to believe, then humbly and sorrowfully we bow our heads in the presence of the tragic fate that threatens and once again appeal to the public opinion of mankind, and to the conscience of Christendom, to save civilization from the shame that may be imminent.

To those leaders of German Jewry who declare that the present anti-Jewish situation in Germany is a local German question, we call attention to the world of Abraham Lincoln. Defenders of slavery urged and excused slavery on the grounds that it was local. Lincoln's answer was "slavery is local but freedom is national." The conscience of humanity has made a world problem of the present situation of the Jews in Germany. We lay down no conditions, we make no stipulations, we do not even urge demands. But we do affirm certain elementary axioms for civilization. The Jews of the world, no more than the Jews of Germany, do not demand exceptional treatment or privileged position or favored status for themselves. We do not even ask for rights. We ask only for the right.

NAZISM TEN YEARS LATER 1943

True enough, alas, good has been weakened, and it was the weakening of the good which made possible the tragic toleration of Hitlerism by those nations which ultimately found it necessary to withstand the illimitable evil that lies at its heart. Many of the best and most precious things of life have been assailed and for a time overcome, but it is not too much to say that the light is beginning to dawn, even for the most reluctant of them that finally came to resist Hitlerism.

Now it is clear to all who see, who are not willfully blind, that an unresisted Hitlerism would have meant the destruction—it might have been for centuries, if not millenia—of every value for which men of faith and courage and aspiration have wrought and fought throughout the ages. May it not truly be said that for a time, when Hitler began to rage, there was a woeful toleration of the evil that he meant by those who would not understand. After the years of toleration and compromise a great dread rested upon individuals

and peoples, lest the world succumb to, or be overwhelmed by, the threatening evil.

Today, however, that is, alas, only after a decade of easy tolerance or of explicable dread, the world of freedom has put aside its tolerance, substituting for these things the will to achieve victory as against every power of enslavement and degradation menacing mankind. Even better, the wisest will not rest satisfied merely to overcome the evil that confronted them. They are, in the word of one of the truest builders of the democratic faith of our own country, resolved to build a better world, a world of peaceful work, in which the millions still living can be free from haunting fear and can do their part as citizens in a new and universal democracy.

WAR 1949

In this hour of almost world-wide conflict between these two systems of politico-economic theory and practice, what, if anything, is Christianity seeking to do, assuming, as I do, that Western democracy is for the most part Christian? I believe that the churches of Christendom are not for the most part intent upon averting the war of wars. Insofar as they support, indeed anticipate, every government plan and undertaking to stand against what is called communism, they are strengthening the war spirit of the nation.

Too many churches lightly assume that war must be, as if war were inevitable, as if there were no way out of the present situation but war. One understands that religionists cannot be sympathetic to a nation that exalts atheism and denies its people freedom of religion. But shall the Churches of God and their peoples in the Western world find atheism in communist lands more imperiling than the most godless of all things—the infinite wrongs, destructions, and defilements of war? If it be claimed that the churches and synagogues are not keen for war, the answer is, are they calling a halt to war plans and programs? Is it not the sin of organized religion to take yet another war for granted and to give no leadership, as it today gives no real and commanding and decisive leadership, to the most imperative of all causes, the cause of averting what may become world-destructive war?

ORTHODOX AND REFORM 1920

Orthodox and reform Jews must be at one in the support of every Jewish interest, but there is a difference, which no pious attempt at reconciliation can minimize, between the fundamental positions of reform and orthodoxy, insofar as

orthodoxy accepts the supremacy of the spirit of authority, and reform maintains the authority of the spirit. The difference between reform and orthodoxy grows out of divergent attitudes toward the Bible. They may well look askance at the absence of the ark from the Sinai Congregation of Chicago or our own Free Synagogue, who maintain that the Torah is the "only begotten" word of God, complete, perfect, unalterable, even as we know that we have no right to cling to the form of the Torah in view of our position, held, if the truth be known, by many nominal conservatives, that the Torah is a human, and therefore imperfect, embodiment of the will of God, as that will revealed itself once, but not forever, through generations of sages, seers, prophets, priests, and rabbis in Israel. Unlike the orthodox, we really accept the validity of the oral tradition, but we hold that an oral tradition once begun cannot be terminated at the seventeenth or twentieth century.

REFORM JUDAISM 1920

Liberal Judaism is not Judaism without the religious life; it is the life of Israel plus a maximum of emphasis upon religion. It is a reaffirmation of the deepest meaning of religion in the life of the Jew and in the life of the world, a reaffirmation of the moral significance of religion translated into the terms of life, a reaffirmation of the moral and social emphasis, of religion, a reaffirmation of the truth that the religion of Israel not only socialized but socializing touching life at every point and seeking to socialize the order in which we live.

We must not assume the failure of liberal religion generally, and of Liberal Judaism in particular, because some have chosen to retract and to recant. For these were camp followers and not disciples, skirmishing phrase mongers rather than fagot-proof devotees. Surely we are not to confound the worth of a cause with the worthlessness of its pseudo followers, forgetting that the faithless impeach not the cause which they betray but themselves alone.

The restoration of ancient forms and ceremonies, moreover, cannot be attained on the ground of expediency or practicability. These can only be if men's souls are hungering for them, not in the hope of undoing the work of Jewish Reform. The elusive and immaterial things of ceremonial and liturgical practice are not to be restored after the hard and fast fashion in which one restores the stones of ancient ruins. The passing of certain forms has not been fatal to Israel, neither will their revival impart new life.

The imperiling attitude toward Israel is not that of the man who abolishes, or suffers to be abolished, the ancient forms through which the spirit breathes no more, but the attitude of him who fails to think of himself as a Jew and to live with his brothers as Jews.

What is needed in Israel today is not to restore the use of the phylacteries, but to bind upon the heart of the Jew the obligation in all essentials of feeling and thinking, and living and dreaming as a Jew.

JEWISH COWARDICE 1920

Jewish Cowardice is a corrupting and polluting influence in Jewish life. I do not like to say what I am about to say, but say it I must because I believe it—the largest measure of anti-Zionism in America, in England, in Germany, in France, in Belgium, in Holland, in Italy, but particularly in America, Germany, England and France, is rooted in cowardice, disguised cowardice, cowardice overlaid with every manner of veneer and tempered by all sorts of rationalization, but cowardice just the same.

Zionism is a facing of the necessity that the Jewish question must be dragged out into the open, faced in the open and solved in the open, dealt with openly and publicly as Theodore Herzl said, and the last thing in the world that most timid and fearful and cowardly Jews desire is to have any Jewish question brought out in the open. Keep it dark —is become almost the Jewish parole or password.

Zionism simply means that we are bound to discuss the Jewish question and solve it publicly. We are not afraid; we are not ashamed. There it is; we must solve it in the sight, and with the help, of the world. And that is exactly what the snobs and the turncoats and the cowards do not want. They will endure Federations of Jewish Charities for the poor, but they are fearful of unions or Federations for the enrichment of Jewish life in its totality. They will endure giving to poor Jews. They do not want the world to see how poor and wretched and woebegone we are as a people, and we are all that because we have not the will and the courage to help and save ourselves.

JEWISH SELF-DETERMINATION 1916

The call to Israel to speak for itself, rather than for ever to be spoken for, comes at a time when the world has been brought to realize the peril which inheres in the conduct of the people's affairs, most especially international affairs, by the powerful and the privileged unamenable to public authority and public control. Out of this war is to come an end of private, professional, secret diplomacy and a begin-

ning of the control by the people of their national and international relationships. For these can never be ordered aright save as they have been brought into the arena of public deliberation and untrammeled discussion.

Are we the people of Israel, to persist in being less democratic then the rest of the world, to insist that we are not competent to pass upon our own problems? Are we forever to suffer men to think and act for us, not because we have chosen and named them, but because they have decreed that we are not fit to be trusted with the power of shaping our own destiny? Among the first of earth's peoples to advocate and to insist upon popular autonomy, shall we be the last to welcome the renewal of the spirit of democracy? Shall we in this democratic land renounce our democratic ideals, and by so much forswear the passionately democratic faith of our fathers?

It is of the essence of the democratic spirit wisely to choose and reasoningly to follow high leadership. To hold that we as a people are anarchic in our incapacity for the acceptance of leadership is wholly to misunderstand Israel's veritable passion for leadership if so be that leadership wise and noble. Through the centuries Israel ceaselessly renewed its quest for leadership in the words of our fathers "na-aseh rosh" —let us choose for ourselves a leader. The leadership which Israel has always rejected has either been imposed by outward authority or unendowed with inward authority. To them that express regret at our seemingly ruthless rejection of the policies that have long been in control of the affairs of American Israels, let it be said that, whatever may have been the necessities of the past, the time is come for a leadership by us to be chosen—a leadership that shall democratically and wisely lead rather than autocratically and unwisely command.

A JEWISH LOOK AT CHRISTIANITY 1927

A Jew looks at Christianity for a moment in the person of him who speaks to you now and says Jesus was a Jew. In three ways Christendom has rejected Jesus, the Jew, far more truly, far more really, far more continuously than the Jew ever rejected Jesus. For the Jesus of Galilee, Christianity has substituted the Christ, I will not say of myth, but the Christ of theology, the Christ of dogma. If some Jews rejected Jesus, the Jew, for an hour, for nineteen centuries the Christ of Church and dogma and theology has been suffered to supersede, and then to reject, Jesus, the Galilean child, Jesus the Jewish teacher.

And in another way, Christendom has rejected and

denied Jesus, the Jew. It magnifies his birth, as on another day it glorifies his death, and what it holds to be his physical resurrection or to have been his resurrection. And for the most part—I know it is an awful indictment, but I must speak as the truth of my heart bids me speak—it ignores what was in Jesus' life, what was on Jesus' lips. It glorifies his birth, it memorializes his death. It ignores, for the most part, his life, his faith, his teaching. That faith which, I must be forgiven for saying, has a minimum in common with the creeds and the dogmas and church councils and all the rest, for, after all, it was the faith of a Jewish child: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God! Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Thou shalt love the stranger as thyself." "Thou shalt love thine enemy"—that alone Jesus added! Jesus never heard, let alone believed, a single item of all that tremendous body of theology and dogma that has not only grown around, but obscured his teachings. And this so minimized his life, that while Christmas is celebrated and the Eastertide commemorated, Christendom for the most part, I will not say wholly, for I will not speak that which is untrue even as it has for nineteen hundred years remembered the birth and glorified the death, forgets his words, rejects his faith, denies his life as incarnate in the word of Jesus the Jew. Verily, in one sense —and now I come to the third way in which Christendom has denied Jesus, the Jew—Christendom has remembered one of the beautitudes: "Blessed are ye when men persecute you." They have persecuted us, not because they were the followers of Jesus, but because they repudiated him, because they blasphemed against him.

If I were a Christian as I am a Jew, I should loathe anti-semitism. Every anti-Jewish outbreak is a new Crucifixion of Jesus the Jew, is the uttermost of blasphemies against the gentleness of the radiant and unforgettable young Galilean.

JEW AND CHRISTIAN 1929

Prejudice and ill-will toward the Jew represent a world attitude which for centuries has stimulated the Jew's spirit of forbearance toward them that wronged us. What Heine said in daringly irreverent jest of God—that He would pardon, for that is His business—might more fittingly have been said of the Jew who has come to command the divinest of human arts, the art of forgiveness; bettering the lesson which Christendom unhappily for itself commended to the soul of the Jew, not by compelling observance, but oft and again by repelling breach.

Greatest of the gains which accrued to the Jew from persecution and discrimination was the necessity under which the Jew found himself of making a decisive choice, the choice between the feebleness of self-obliteration and the strength of self-insistence. The frail among our fathers committed suicide in one way or another under the intolerable pressure of a pitiless world. The unyielding and the unstooping among our forbears lifted themselves up to a resolution which meant much to the spiritual fortunes of the human race as well as to our own destinies as a people —the ennobling resolution to live and not to die, the resolution more nobly to live, despite the challenge of the world ignobly to perish.

ZIONISM 1935

Zionism means infinitely more than the building or rebuilding of the Jewish National Home. It means the Jewish will to live Jewishly versus the wish to survive Jewishly or un-Jewishly, to create a Jewish centre in the Judea of history whence shall radiate Jewish stimulus and inspiration to Jews wherever they may dwell. Zionism is the Jewish answer to cowardly counsels of Jewish suicide. Zionism is the collective will of the Jewish people to endure and to create. Hence I have conceived it to be one of my primary obligations to give a goodly measure of my strength to the futherance of this cause.

ZIONISM 1944

Zionism means the reconstituting of the Jewish people as a people in the Jewish Homeland. I have only to add that it will come as one of the moral triumphs of the global war. The English speaking peoples, I am confident, desire it; the Soviet Union cannot fail to give its concurrence. The failure to establish the Jewish Palestine would mark the tragic failure of the global war.

I venture to prophesy that the free and democratic Jewish commonwealth will become one of the abiding achievements of the global war. The Jew owes it to himself to insist upon a free and democratic Jewish National Home. The Christian world owes to the Jew reparation for all the centuries of wrong and hurt and humiliation—reparation for the awful and tragic Hitler years. That return will be afforded the Jew. The Jew has taken full part in the waging and the winning of the war. The Jew has been the earliest and the greatest sufferer under the Hitler regime. A free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth means nothing more than justice to the Jew, freedom for the Jew, Jewish equality, with all the free people of the earth.

ZION & AMERICA 1948

Laugh, at those who speak of dual loyalties and divided allegiance. We have an allegiance to the spiritual heritage of a great and imperishable people. We have another allegiance to the people of our great country, of whom we are a part. There is no divided allegiance. There is a transcending allegiance crowning and glorifying both.

If men say to you, ask of you, "Are you a citizen of the State of Israel?", or "Are you a citizen of the American Republic and teacher of its people?", answer them: "The memories, the traditions, the hopes, the dreams, the sufferings, the sorrows of four thousand years have not sundered me from the blood and the race of the people of Israel. I am one of them. As a citizen I belong wholly to America. America is my country and I have none other. To it I give the utmost of my loyalty, the deepest of my love, the truest of my service."

ETHICS: THE LAW OF HOLINESS 1924

Every level has its own laws. On the physical level there are the laws of physics; on the chemical level there are the laws of chemistry; on the biological level there are the laws of biology; on the psychical level there are the laws of psychology that we are just beginning to understand; on the level of our spiritual life there is the law of holiness.

Life is physical in its origin, as one great thinker phrases it, but spiritual in its possibilities. We are more than biological beings; we have risen to the estate of manhood and womanhood, and it is the duty of every one of us to raise the whole of our life to the highest level that we know. It is our duty to create a personality not that shall incorporate the low desires of the body, but that shall enshrine the highest aspirations of the spirit. This is what we should have taught and must teach our children and that we must reteach ourselves.

Stephen S. Wise
1940

DR. S. S. WISE DEAD; LEADER IN ZIONISM

Noted Senior Rabbi of Free Synagogue Was 75—Victim of Stomach Ailment

Editor's Note: Obituary and Editorial, The New York Times, April 20, 1949.

The Rev. Dr. Stephen S. Wise, world-famous senior rabbi of the Free Synagogue here, died at 4 P.M. yesterday at Lenox Hill.

The 75-year-old president of the American Jewish Congress and head of the World Jewish Congress had been admitted to the hospital on March 30 for the treatment of a "malignant stomach ailment." He underwent an operation on April 7. After a rally he weakened, and was put on the critical list Saturday night.

Early yesterday morning the hospital reported that he had lapsed into a coma and that "the outlook was very grave." He did not regain consciousness.

With him at the time of his death were his sister, Mrs. Ella Fish; his son, James Waterman Wise, and the latter's wife; his daughter, Justine Wise Polier, and her husband, Shad Polier.

A funeral service will be held at 2 P.M. Friday at Carnegie Hall, where for many years Rabbi Wise conducted the services of the Free Synagogue. His body will lie at the Synagogue House, 40 West Sixty-eighth Street, from 9 A.M. to 10 P.M. tomorrow, when the public will be admitted.

Burial will be in the Westchester Hills Cemetery of the Free Synagogue, Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y.

Pinnacle of His Career

If anything could be singled out as having given Stephen Samuel Wise a sense of fulfillment in the final months of his life, it was—as he told friends—that he had lived to see the establishment of the State of Israel as his people's homeland. It was in his uninterrupted labor for and devotion to the Zionist movement that many believed he achieved the pinnacle of forty-nine years in the pulpit.

Rabbi Wise was an outstanding personality in the American rabbinate. Spokesman on many Jewish questions for a large following of co-religionists, he recurrently aroused, as he himself admitted, the antipathy of many other distinguished Jews who differed with him on the basic problems of the Jew in America. It was seldom that the eloquent rabbi of the Free Synagogue was not involved in one controversy or another: as a formulator of policy, as a Zionist, as a reformer or as a representative of American Jews at meetings in London, Basle or Geneva.

Dr. Wise was admittedly non-assimilationist. In one of his most discussed speeches he pointed out in 1938 (as he had in very nearly the same words many times before) that, although he had been an American for only a few generations, he had been a Jew for 4,000 years. It was such rhetoric, understandable in its hyperbole to some Christians however much they differed with its implication, that many disliked.

His Stand Was Clear

Yet, despite the persistent aura of controversy, which puzzled many Christians and Jews with only a passing interest in Dr. Wise, his stand on the relation of the Jew to America was clear. He held, simply, that the contribution of the Jew to this country had been made, and must continue to be made, by the Jew as a Jew, and not as an "American Jew" or "Jewish-American" or "American of Jewish faith." To this tenet he added the important corollary that the Americanism of the Jew was in no way diluted or marred by his adherence to his ancient heritage.

Every one who heard Dr. Wise knew him for an unusual orator: it was said of him frequently that he might have been a great actor. His voice was deeply resonant and always under superb dramatic control.

His appearance was in keeping with his voice and oratorical style. His iron-gray hair—blacker than it was gray—was combed straight back and parted in the middle. It was thick enough at the nape to justify the reiterated adjective, "leonine." He was tall, broad browed and thoroughly impressive.

All his life Dr. Wise was a crusader, and while in latter years his zeal was expended mostly for the Zionist movement and the creation of Palestine as a national home for the Jews, his crusading for better civic government cannot be overlooked. He fought Tammany from the days of Croker through the days of Curry, sought Jimmy Walker's removal in 1931 as well as that of other Tammany officials, headed the City Affairs Committee, and consistently and enthusiastically backed Fiorello H. La Guardia in his campaigns for Mayor and Franklin D. Roosevelt in his campaigns for the Presidency.

Honored on Birthday

On his sixtieth birthday, in 1934, he was signally honored by dinners held for him in this and other cities, and the same procedure was followed on his seventieth birthday. In Chicago, the dinner was the largest ever held in that city, and a luncheon, two days before, was attended by 400 priests and ministers, a unique tribute by the leaders of other religious groups.

Dr. Wise saw the Hitlerite menace to the Jews and to the world early. From 1933 on, his activities in this field increased until they overshadowed everything else. He was president of the American Jewish Congress, chairman of the executive committee of the World Jewish Congress, a member of the Executive Board of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, co-chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council, president and founder of the Jewish Institute of Religion and of countless other off-

shoots of the Jewish and Palestinian movements.

He took two leaves of absence from the Free Synagogue to carry on this work, and among his accomplishments was his obtaining from the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, in March, 1944, authorization to say that Roosevelt had never approved the British White Paper of 1939 on Palestine, and that a Jewish national home had Mr. Roosevelt's approval.

Member of Rabbinical Line

Dr. Wise was the son of a rabbi, as were his father, his grandfather and his great-grandfather before him. He was born in Budapest, Hungary, on March 17, 1874. When he was a year old his parents, Aaron and Sabine de Fischer Farkashasy Wise, settled in New York, and his father became rabbi of Temple Rodeph Sholom, a post which he held until his death in 1896.

From earliest childhood the Wises prepared their son to be a rabbi. They sent him to the public schools, to City College and afterward to Columbia University. He spent seven years at Columbia, majoring in Semitic languages, and his thesis, which won him a Doctor's degree in 1901, involved a translation from the original Arabic of a twelfth-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

After being graduated from Columbia Dr. Wise spent a six months' novitiate as an assistant rabbi. His first pulpit was the Congregation B'nai Jashurun in Madison Avenue. On Nov. 14, 1900, he married Miss Louise Waterman, daughter of Julius and Justine Mayer Waterman of New York. Dr. and Mrs. Wise had two children, James Waterman Wise and Mrs. Justine Wise Tulin Polier, subsequently a justice of the Court of Domestic Relations.

Dr. Wise had served for seven years at the Madison Avenue Temple when he received a call to Temple Beth Israel at Portland, Ore.

The West was an entirely new world to him, unhampered by traditions and conventions. It challenged his ambition to achievement and he took up the work eagerly, making his pulpit a power in the city of Portland. He founded the Civic Forum and became its president.

Dr. Wise took up the cudgels against gambling and became a leader in social reforms. He helped draft the first child labor laws in Oregon. He assisted in the drafting of important additions to the State's penological laws. He helped to form the Prisoners Aid Society. The echoes of his achievements reached New York.

Decided to Come East

About that time the congregation of Temple Emanu-El in New York was seeking a rabbi to aid the beloved Dr. Silverman. The trustees knew of Dr. Wise. They invited him to come to New York. He came here and preached for them. A deputation from the board called on him to confer regarding the new post. He told them that he would accept only on the condition that it should be his pulpit and that he should have it absolutely free. The pulpit of Temple Emanu-El, he was told, was subject to and controlled by the board of trustees. Dr. Wise returned to Portland.

But the incident attracted widespread attention, and a few weeks later Dr. Wise's congregation in Portland was startled by his resignation, to be effective at the end of 1906. Jews and Gentiles joined in trying to persuade him to remain. A salary of $10,000 a year for life and many other inducements were offered him. But he had made up his mind to start a free synagogue in New York and he put his plan into effect.

He began with Sunday morning services in the Hudson Theatre. Crowds went to hear him. He eloquently outlined his plans. He wanted a free synagogue, with a free pulpit; a free and democratic organization with no pew rents; and a free and reasonable development of the fundamentals of Judaism.

He got his synagogue, and saw it grow and grow through the years. It outgrew building after building, and only the building conditions during the second World War prevented a still newer and greater Free Synagogue from being completed in 1942.

The candor with which Dr. Wise expressed himself on every occasion sometimes caused his synagogue to lose members. He lost them when he launched a violent attack upon Tammany Leader Richard Croker. After ten years of absence, Mr. Croker had returned to this country and had been honored with a welcoming dinner at Sherry's. District Attorney Jerome, who had fought Mr. Croker bitterly in the old days, and twelve Supreme Court justices were among the guests. Dr. Wise declared the dinner to be a feast of shame.

Dr. Wise lost members, too, on other occasions when he admitted Jesus to a place among the prophets, when he espoused the cause of some striking shirtwaist makers. And he lost his largest contributor when he went into a series of union meetings with two neighboring churches. Nevertheless, he stuck fearlessly to his motto, saying what he saw. Many Jews listened with horror to his utterances, called him a notoriety-seeker, and declared his synagogue to be a crazy house. But there are hosts of others who regarded his work with genuine admiration.

Dr. Wise became an ardent Zionist in the day of Theodore Herzl, and was one of the foremost leaders of the Zionist movement that followed the wresting of the Holy Land from the Turks during the first World War. He was a founder and first secretary of the Foundation of American Zionists and wrote for Zionist publications in this country and abroad. He served as chairman of the provisional executive committee for general Zionist affairs in America. Subsequently he was chosen vice president of the world Zionist organization's executive committee.

When, in 1925, he counseled Jews to accept the story of Jesus and regard Him as a moral teacher —not as a myth or God, but as a man and Jew of whom they could be proud—the resentment of Orthodox Jewry precipitated a violent controversy. For a time this controversy created widespread dissension in the conduct of the United Palestine Fund's appeal for $5,000,000. Dr. Wise, who was chairman of the appeal, offered his resignation. But several wealthy and influential Jews made additional contributions to show their confidence in Dr. Wise, and at their urging he consented to continue as chairman.

DR. STEPHEN S. WISE

Stephen Wise was an intense, eloquent and even belligerent crusader for what he believed in. A descendant of rabbis, he was brought to this country as an infant, was schooled in New York City and became a prominent figure in the city's life. He had great gifts as a speaker, but he had also a talent for organization. In a half century in the pulpit he was often a center of controversy, and it may be reckoned as one of his sources of power that he did not weigh too cautiously the consequences of a given line of action but proceeded on the basis of principle as he saw it.

In later years his interest in Zionism and international affairs occupied much of his attention. In an earlier day he concerned himself actively as a good citizen with local governmental reforms, jousting with Tammany, fighting for advances in social legislation. An advocate of peace, he nevertheless recognized, in both World Wars, that there are times when a higher principle must take precedence over antipathy to war. We and others differed with him on occasion, but none doubted his patriotism, his great gifts as a man and preacher. A strong believer in one world, with justice for all peoples and races and faiths, he left his mark on the history of our time.

Stephen Wise as I knew him

Justine Wise Polier

Rabbi Klein asked that I share with you tonight personal recollections of my beloved father. And I feel that this is right since this synagogue was and will always be his loved and loving home in a profound sense and your Rabbi was his chosen successor whom he both respected and loved as a son.

My earliest recollection of my father goes back to when I was five and had to have a mastoid operation at home on the kitchen table because I also had scarlet fever. I remember holding his hand as they put a mask over my face. It was his hand that I reached for when I came out of the ether and it was there. That summer we went to East Hampton and twice each week I had to be taken to the surgeon to have my ear dressed. On the way in, father taught me to read and we had fun. On the way back, after a painful session at the doctor, I was cradled in his arms and fell asleep, unaware that he would not move lest he wake me, regardless of how his muscles ached.

As I think back to life at home as a child, I realize over and over again that he was never too busy to respond at once when my brother or I turned to him or interrupted him. As I grew older I understood that this was why he meant so much to so many people. It was his immediate response to another human being, never "later or tomorrow", but rather now. Years later when he gave me the works of Booth on Poverty in London, father had underlined: "Only the poor know how to give. They give when it is needed and without questions."

Life at Lake Placid in the long summers of those days was the happiest of times. Father would get up at five and go to his log cabin to read, study and write. When I awoke, I would go up, always to be greeted with tenderness, gaity and love. Then down to the lake for a long swim with father rowing alongside as guard and protector. During the summer there was work in the woods, the sawing and the splitting, the joy of no telephones, and long walks into the mountains. And each summer a five mile hike to John Brown's grave and a joining in hero-worship of brave spirits who dared all for their beliefs. Yet, I also sensed that unlike Brown, father could never separate the ends for which one fought from the means one used.

In the evenings there was reading aloud in front of the log fire—first a selection from some great book by mother or father who both read beautifully, and then something humorous, Mark Twain, Petroleum Nasby or Artemis Ward. I have never forgotten the wonderful line: "The trouble about people who brag about their descent is that they forget how far the descent has been.

There were also serious problems that invaded this mountain dream world. With the coming of World War I, there were the sharp differences between those who supported Germany and those who saw the Kaiser as an arch villain. We had one relative who sided with Germany, and we were told not to discuss the war with her. But one day, after returning from church where Reverend Charles Parkhurst had spoken against the infamy of the Kaiser, our relative was at dinner. And I naughtily repeated Dr. Parkhurst's statement that the Kaiser was a mad dog and should be shot as one. Our relative rose from the table and said she could not remain if a child was allowed to speak in such fashion. I was then sent upstairs to my room. A little later my brother and I overheard father saying to mother, "I will not permit anyone to silence my children." And my brother and I shouted, "That's right", and came tumbling downstairs to be embraced.

There were other battles that took shape in Placid which we witnessed. I can remember the day when father drafted and redrafted the letter for him and his beloved friend, John Haynes Holmes, to send to Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt demanding the removal of Mayor James Walker.

Behind such matters there was ever present the concern for Jewish problems and Jewish suffering wherever it occurred. There was constant struggle against the drive to assimilation by Jews. My father saw this drive as rooted or mired in lack of self-respect and in failure to appreciate the meaning and unique contribution of Judaism throughout world history. When, in addition, conversions were seen as a pathway to status or success, he spoke his contempt in no uncertain terms. Wholeheartedly Jewish, he saw the Ethical Culture movement as a watering down of Judaism,

and he was saddened by those who separated themselves from the life of the Jewish people in any way.

Despite the inevitable battles, my father's approach to Jewish life and Judaism was constantly to seek how to strengthen Jewish life at its best. He had been inspired by the dream of Zion as a child. His father's mother had gone to Palestine to live and serve the poor. In 1898 when he was 24 years old he had become the first English speaking secretary for the Second Zionist Congress in Basel. There he met and was forever inspired by coming to know Theodore Herzl. From then on his devotion to the cause of rebuilding Zion was unending. Very much alone in the reform rabbinate, he went from town to town meeting with simple Jews to engage them in the struggle and collect their shekels. And day after day he answered letters longhand and responded to endless requests to visit communities all over the land. As the years went by there were more supporters and the battlefront was enlarged. There were times of tragedies and days of hope, as when President Wilson finally sent the letter to our home saying he would support the Balfour Declaration.

Despite the intensity of work on behalf of Zion, his goal went further as he dreamed of helping to build the unity of the Jewish people. He was deeply religious and his religion included an abiding respect for the quest by man to find God or the good in accordance with his own conscience. He never felt hostility toward those who found answers different from his own. Rather he respected differences and wanted this synagogue, the Jewish Institute of Religion and the American Jewish Congress to welcome Jews, regardless of their religious or theological differences. He respected others and his love encompassed the totality of the Jewish people.

But he could become angry and did show anger when confronted by those who were corrupt, cowardly or self-serving. And he attacked and sought to challenge them as individuals for what they did or represented. Yet, even in regard to such individuals whom he might flay one day, he bore no personal hostility, and he could reach beyond the conflict to see the man, especially when a man needed help. Great battles never lessened his response to anyone who needed help, whether the person was a student who had failed in his work, a defendent in a criminal trial who needed a character witness, or a convict sentenced to death who needed comforting. No appeal for help was ever rejected, and no letter was ever left unanswered.

I never sensed a moment of question about choosing between struggles to secure the rights of Jews or to lessen their suffering and the struggle for justice to all. Both were part of him as he was part of them, and so there could be no conflict. Thus, one finds he supported the right of the street-car conductors to strike against inhumane work conditions as a young rabbi in 1899. He served as mediator in many strikes on questions of fair wages and hours in the early part of the century. When he was invited as the silver-tongued orator from the West to address the National Chamber of Commerce in 1911, he chose as his theme, "The Conscience of the Nation." And he told the great captains of finance of those days: "If the conscience of the nation is to make for complete lawfulness, we must regulate the power of the few in order that to the many there may be left liberty to be regulated." When he came home that night, father told my mother that the only person comfortable in the great dining hall when he finished, was Admiral Peary, who had just returned from the North Pole.

And so the battles continued beginning with his signing the call in 1909 for the organization of NAACP. His breaking the silence and supporting the striking steel workers in 1918. It was at that time when the first plans had been laid for the building of the Free Synagogue that he said at breakfast, "Here's where the synagogue goes up in smoke." He spoke that Sunday on "Who are the True Bolsheviks?" and the synagogue was not built for 30 years.

I cannot close these personal remembrances without speaking of the relationship between my parents. My father found joy in my mother's beauty and in her painting. They shared their dreams and their work. Towards his Louise there was ever chivalrous devotions and abiding love. And her gifts to him were many. Her sole question at difficult times was: "If you think it's right, what is the question?" She never looked up to anyone or down to anyone. And she had absolute faith in him. As an artist and as a human being, she retained a child-like quality that went to the essence of issues. In 1913, at the Government House in Palestine, when the courtly Sir Wyndham Deeds asked if he could do anything to make her stay more pleasant, she answered: "I noticed the British have paved many roads, but the road to the Jewish cemetery is not paved. And the poor Jews have to carry their dead over the uneven cobbled road. Could it not be paved?" My father was a bit taken aback, but rejoiced in her. As we were leaving by ship a few days later, a message from Sir Wyndham was delivered to my

mother saying, "Your wish is a command. The road will be paved." And father was so proud of her.

As I try in a few words to sketch a picture I see a gallant, generous all-giving man who enlisted for life, ready to be embattled and do battle for his beliefs. He was strong but humble in its truest sense. He was firm but always compassionate. He could be roused to anger but never became vengeful. Neither friend nor foe were ever dehumanized. Love and gaiety lifted his heart and filled his being so that he could always give to others without stint.

Yet, he suffered the loneliness that is part of leadership. But it was lighted by his joy in nature, in art and in other human beings. His joy in others, his happiness in children, his hope for them, brought him sustenance. Love of others provided a shield against despair, even in the saddest of Nazi days. He faced the threat to life in a world where man could destroy life and was determined to do all that he could do to meet it to the last moment of his life.

As my father faced death, clear-eyed and unafraid, it was once again he who was courteous, kind and considerate to everyone. Barber, nurse, physicians were all touched by the courage and gentleness of the man. Almost unaware of what he did for others, he was never unaware of others. Some years after his death, my brother found a letter father had written to my mother in 1919. He first described a happy home he had visited where mother had placed an adoptive child. Then he wrote: "A moment ago I was touched by something I prize more than a French decoration—a poor Jewish newsboy came to me saying, 'I know who you are and what you have done for the Jews. God keep you alive for the sake of our people.' More than I deserved but exactly what I most covet. Well, dearest, we have some form of immortality before us—for you the blessings of the babies, though they know you not, and as for myself a day's remembrance by my people. A day is a long time for a little."

The day of remembrance goes on in Israel and in this country my father loved so deeply – in his words, in his work and above all, in the lives of those who knew him or were touched by his life.

Address given at
Stephen Wise Free Synagogue
March 15, 1974

Stephen Wise as I knew him

Rabbi Edward E. Klein

March 17 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Stephen Samuel Wise, alav hashalom, founder of the Free Synagogue, founder of the American and World Jewish Congress, founder of the Jewish Institute of Religion, tribune of his people. History books record his achievements, the institutions and the organizations he created memorialize him. But one had to know him to gauge the true measure of the man. I had the rare privilege of knowing him well. I was his student for five years, his assistant for two, his associate for six years. Prophets are usually regarded as forbidding and unapproachable.

Stephen Wise was a warm, tender human being who loved people and evoked the best from them. He was patient with human frailties, never too busy for the courtesy, the respect, the tenderness that make life livable. Busy as he was, he never refused to see a student, or a person in need; he never failed to answer a letter, no matter how trivial the contents. How moving were the tender manifestations of his affection for his family—white lilacs for Mrs. Wise every Shabbat, and while he was traveling a letter or two every day. Describing these letters, gathered in the volume, "Letters to Louise," his children wrote, "They record the extraordinary capacity for love which was central to his being, love that suffused his personal life and home, love that flowed into his relations with children and friends and associates and even strangers, love that channeled itself into work for his people, love for his country America, for the disinherited and oppressed of every race and faith."

Such was the man. What of the meaning of his ministry? And ministry it was, for Wise was first and foremost a Rabbi, "I have need," he wrote, "of a shrine before which men bow their heads and lift their hearts in the sense or consciousness of the Holy Presence." He knew the power of prayer, and none who heard him recite the 23rd Psalm

could ever doubt that God was his Shepherd. He was a Rabbi in the great tradition of the teachers of our faith who by precept and example sought to bring God into the lives of people, to light up the dark places of the soul. As a student of Jewish history, Stephen Wise knew that faith is no mere escape; we Jews could not escape life's grim realities even if we chose to; we have been the targets of its slings and arrows for 2,000 years, but we faced tragedy with courage and fortitude by virtue of the faith that moved us. And how eloquently he interpreted it!

In his own career, Stephen Wise faced frustrations a thousand times, the backbreaking chore of building a Zionist movement in the face of the indifference of most American Jews and the hostility of the world, warning of the dangers of Hitlerism and finding his pleas falling on deaf ears until it was too late to save 6 million martyrs. And this would have broken the spirit of a man of little faith. "At the heart of a whirlwind tearing the sky, there is a place of central calm," wrote the poet. Stephen Wise was a whirlwind of action for the right, because within was that place of central calm, the place of faith's still voice, where hopes and dreams and visions were launched.

But unlike so many Reform Rabbis of his day, Wise knew that Judaism is more than a faith. Jews are more than American or English or French citizens of the Jewish persuasion. The corporate life of Jewry is an essential of Jewishness; Jewish community, the history of our people, these are living laboratories of the spiritual truths we have given to the world. "Being a religious people," Dr. Wise said, "doesn't alter the fact that we are a people." Zionism was for him the expression of Jewish peoplehood. He founded the Federation of American Zionists from which the A.O.A. developed, and journeyed the length and breadth of America in its behalf. That every American president since Woodrow Wilson has been friendly to Israel is testimony to Wise's valiant effort. He induced Wilson to initial the Balfour Declaration. He testified before committees and commissions begging, pleading, preaching, thundering for the establishment of the State of which he was in truth an architect. But Jewry, *chutz laaretz,* was also in the orbit of his concern. He fought anti-Semitism in America, through the American Jewish Congress, he labored for the rights of Jews wherever they were abrogated, through the World Jewish Congress.

In the tradition of the prophets of old, his vision embraced all mankind. "Throughout my life," he wrote, "it seemed to me that all ministers of religion were for justice in principle, but too ready to be silent about injustice in practice. One of the dangers of all of us is that we are willing to fight for justice for ourselves alone, forgetting that justice will be for all or none. For me the supreme declaration of the Hebrew Bible was and remains, 'Justice, justice shalt thou pursue,' whether it be easy or hard, whether it be justice for white or black, Jew or Christian."

Thus he was one of the small group that founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and was one of the first to champion a federal Fair Employment Practices Commission. He thundered against exploitation in the steel industry, and was one of labor unionism's earliest advocates. He excoriated the corruption of New York's Tammany Hall under Jimmy Walker, and helped initiate the Reform movement which put Fiorello H. La Guardia in office. And towards the end of his life he lifted his mighty voice in behalf of lasting peace at the organization of the UN in San Francisco.

All this was embodied in the new congregation he founded in 1907, a Free Synagogue conceived in freedom and dedicated to it in principle and practice through the years. It was no easy thing to do in the early years of our century, when "Our Crowd," so graphically described in Stephen Birmingham's volume, preferred cathedral congregations reflecting their social philosophy and respecting their status. But Stephen Wise was intent on establishing a Synagogue, "pewless and dueless, for the masses rather than the classes," to use his words, with a pulpit free to speak the truth as the Rabbi sees it. And dedicated Jews gathered 'round him, and even some members of "Our Crowd" came under his spell. Like the diapason of a great organ, his mighty voice was raised with prophetic fervor in denunciation of injustice, in defense of peace, in support of Zion. And the congregation grew, moving from rented quarters in a church, to Carnegie Hall, to the building on 68th Street now occupied by the New York School of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, to its present handsome edifice. It is significant of the breadth of Wise's vision that the first sermon after the first High Holyday services was given by Dr. Thomas Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, and speakers in the early years included Lillian Wald, Florence Kelly, Jacob A. Riis, Jacob A. Schiff, Edward Everett Hale, William Lyon Phelps, and Alfred Noyes. Soon after the Synagogue was founded, its Social Service Department was established that the congregation might give

expression to service to God through service to man.

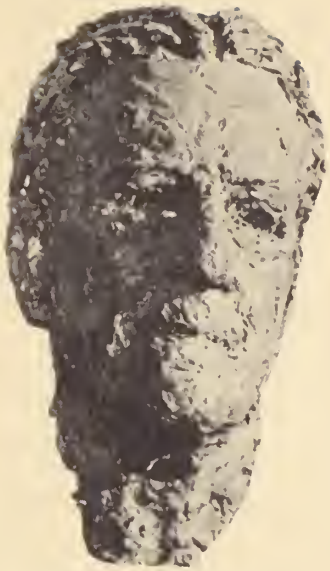
If the principles of pulpit freedom, no assigned seating, and no fixed dues are today the practice of many of our Reform congregations, it is because Stephen Wise's pioneering efforts in the Free Synagogue proved them viable. Would that more of our Synagogues conducted departments of social service, an area abdicated too soon to the secular agencies. The Free Synagogue, renamed the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, attracting members from the entire New York area, throbbing with the activities he envisioned, stands today as his living memorial.

The man and the message could not be confined to a building, a neighborhood, a community. The Free Synagogue, under Dr. Wise's leadership, became a movement. In connection with its tenth anniversary, the Stephen S. Wise Fellowship Fund was established, which ultimately brought here Rabbis Louis I. Newman, Abraham Feldman, Max Weis, Maxwell Silver, Lewis Browne, and others. Branches were established in Washington Heights, Bronx, Flushing, Westchester, Newark. But this was no solution for the burgeoning needs of the Greater New York Jewish community. New York was and is the great center of Jewish life, a laboratory of American Jewish living. True, the Hebrew Union College was training men for the Reform Rabbinate in Cincinnati, the Jewish Theological Seminary for the Conservative Rabbinate in New York, and the Isaac Elchanan Yeshivah for the Orthodox Rabbinate here. But was this enough for the 3½ million Jews who lived in the United States in 1921? The Jews of Austria and Germany, numbering less than a million, had four theological seminaries in Berlin, Vienna, Breslau, and Budapest. Not only was it important to train men in the great center of Jewish life, but Wise felt that they should be trained for the service of the total Jewish community, with love and understanding of Zionism, as Rabbis and community leaders, without sectarian limitations. "I felt," he said, "and insisted that teachers and students alike must remain intellectually and spiritually free, that there be no shackling of the minds to orthodox or reform dogma." Wise proposed that the Jewish Institute of Religions be sponsored by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, as a coordinate of the Hebrew Union College, but when this was rejected he set out to raise the necessary funds for the new seminary. With characteristic modesty he offered the presidency to Emil Hirsch of Chicago, who felt too committed to Sinai Congregation and the University of Chicago to accept; later, to Israel Abrahams, who found it difficult to leave Cambridge; and finally to Mordecai Kaplan, who decided to remain at the Seminary. Dr. Wise happily served as President until the merger with the Hebrew Union College in 1948.

Shortly before his passing he saw that the time had come for a merger with the Hebrew Union College. "I felt," he said, "that such a union could be effected at last because the college had come under the leadership of the youthful and dynamic personality of its newly elected president, Dr. Nelson Glueck." The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, with schools in New York, Cincinnati, Los Angeles and Jerusalem, is today the largest rabbinical seminary in the world.

Like a lordly cedar he fell in 1949 and left a lonesome place against the sky. With characteristic thoughtfulness he left a letter making suggestions for the funeral service. He asked that the author, his associate at the time, officiate, that Dr. David Pategorsky, Executive Director of the American Jewish Congress, deliver the eulogy, and that a prayer or poem be read by his life-long comrade, the minister of the Community Church, Dr. John Haynes Holmes. "Into the hand of God," he wrote, "I command my spirit. May he continue to vouchsafe me His Grace and mercy." The service, held at Carnegie Hall, April 22, 1949, was conducted according to his directions. Three thousand people crowded the auditorium, and another fifteen thousand listened to the service through loudspeakers on West 57th Street. The cortege passed through Harlem, where Stephen Wise's many black admirers lined the streets, hats off and heads bowed.

He was laid to rest in the Westchester Hills Cemetery of the Free Synagogue by the side of his beloved wife Louise Waterman Wise. Among the many words of sympathy sent to his sorrowing children were these eloquent words of Albert Einstein, "He has not only been taken from you, but from all of us. He left a gap among us which cannot be filled. He always knew how to help and how to arouse people's consciences wherever it was necessary. In times of great adversity he helped the Jewish people to maintain dignity and to win their independence, and to every individual he was an understanding friend. No effort was ever too much for him when he felt the obligation to go into action. I consider it a blessing to have been close to him personally. For it is due to the few of his stature that one does not completely despair of man. His deep moral influence will continue, although he is no longer with us."



Because I am a Jew,
I have spoken the truth as I have seen it
to Jews & of them,
to Christians & of them,
to Americans & of them,
to Synagogue & Church & of them,
to the powerful & privileged & of them,
to the lowly & disinherited & for them.
Stephen Wise
1874 1949

The bust of Stephen S. Wise by Robert Berks, commissioned by the children of the late Joseph and Rose Durst, adorns the entrance foyer of the Synagogue as a symbol of the long-time association of Joseph Durst (1882-1974) and Dr. Wise. They labored side by side in behalf of the United Jewish Appeal and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. Together they developed a program of assistance for some of the first German-Jewish refugees admitted to this country during the Nazi holocaust.

Refusing to be a mere recipient of spiritual favors, Joseph Durst gave sacrificially of himself and his substance to carry forward the life of the Synagogue. As Trustee, Vice President, and consultant to the Building Committee of the Synagogue, he helped immeasurably in the construction of our Synagogue House and the development of our many-faceted program of service.

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